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ABSTRACT

An Oregon school implemented a program of journal writing in grades 5 to 8 and evaluated its effects upon the language arts curriculum and students' writing ability. Each of the 11 teachers in the project decided the amount of time to allocate to journal writing and the routines to establish, although all followed certain guidelines on confidentiality, daily feedback, and students' choice of topic. Questionnaires and interviews with the teachers at the end of the school year indicated that most attempted to respond in writing to students' journals regularly, but only two teachers responded daily; many found the task of responding to be a very heavy burden. Teachers reported obtaining useful diagnostic information from students' journals but very few used this information for establishing instructional priorities or teaching needed skills. Over the period of nine months every journal writing class showed gains in spelling performance ranging from slight to almost two years. Over the nine months, the total group also made modest gains in general writing ability, and the lower ability groups made substantial gains. In addition, the journal writing program positively influenced student scores on language usage tests. (HTH)

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The Robert Gray Journal Project

An account of a year-long journal-writing activity in grades five through eight.

Colin Dunkeld
Sandra Anderson

Portland State University

October 1983

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CS 208 152

THE ROBERT GRAY JOURNAL PROJECT

Colin Dunkeld and Sandra Anderson

Background

Robert Gray School at 5505 S.W. 23rd Avenue, in southwest Portland, Oregon, is a K - 8 public elementary school. It has an enrollment of 476 students with self-contained homerooms at levels K - 4 and a separate subjects curriculum from grades 5 through 8. It has a principal, an administrative assistant, 27 teachers, including specialists in music, home-economics, shop and foreign languages, plus two teacher aides and a librarian. It is located in the heart of a middle to high socio-economic residential area. 94.8% of its students live in the surrounding area. 5.2% are administrative transfer students bused in from other parts of the City. It therefore draws students from a wide geographical area with diverse socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds.

Sandra Anderson is a former elementary teacher with an M.S. in Education from Portland State University and the mother of a daughter in the school. Colin Dunkeld is a Professor of Education at P.S.U. and a specialist in reading and language arts. In the 1981-82 school year, Sandra Anderson served as a parent volunteer aide in a sixth-grade class and helped the classroom teacher, Mr. Ken Valdivia, initiate a daily journal writing program for the improvement of children's writing ability. Colin Dunkeld visited the school by invitation and served as a voluntary consultant to the program. The sixth-grade children wrote daily throughout the year on topics of interest to them. Journal writing became a sustained, integral, and valued part of the language arts curriculum for that class.

The program attracted attention throughout the school, and a number of teachers in grades 5 through 8 expressed interest in developing similar programs

in the school year 82-83. Some informal meetings took place with the volunteer consultants, the teachers, and the principal.

The interest of the principal and the teachers was very encouraging, and a project began to take shape which promised to raise, confront, and shed light on a number of issues surrounding journal writing that had clear implications for both pre-service and in-service teacher training. For these reasons Sandra Anderson and Colin Dunkeld were willing to continue in a voluntary capacity as designers and co-directors of a journal-writing project for those teachers in grades 5 - 8 who had shown interest. A formal proposal outlining goals and responsibilities was prepared, and the principal, Mr. Wes Bartholomus, gave the proposal his enthusiastic support.

The Scope of the Project

The project was planned for the 1982-83 school year. Language arts periods were forty-five minutes long. Five teachers were assigned to five ability-grouped sections of mixed fifth- and sixth-grade students. Seven teachers were assigned to seven ability-grouped sections of mixed seventh- and eighth-grade students. All twelve teachers were invited to take part.

Participation by teachers was to be entirely voluntary, and teachers were free to withdraw if the activities interfered, conflicted with, or were not relevant to their language arts program. The proposal asked teachers to plan from ten to twenty minutes per day for journal writing plus another two periods per week of twenty minutes each for language lessons arising from the journals. We anticipated that journal writing might take about one-third of the time allotted to language arts, that it would not be an addition to the language arts curriculum but an alternative means of meeting existing goals.

The project directors agreed to make a series of presentations about journal writing at the beginning of the year and every few weeks as long as necessary, to visit classrooms by invitation, and to assist, demonstrate, and monitor the general development of project activities. The teachers agreed to attend the presentation/discussion sessions whenever possible, to begin a program of journal writing, to carry out whatever suggestions were appropriate to their students, to maintain the program as long as it was consistent with and contributed towards the goals of the language arts curriculum, to report on their progress to the project staff, and to participate in a number of evaluation activities.

Goals and Research Questions

The goals of the project were to design and implement a program of journal writing in grades 5 through 8 and evaluate its effects upon a number of aspects of the language arts curriculum and the development of students' writing ability.

Research questions were:

1. To what extent will teachers implement and value the program as a whole and each of its many parts?

2. What effect if any will the program have on students' spelling, general writing ability, and performance on district language arts evaluation instruments?

3. What are the characteristics of children's work:
   - the frequency and amount of writing
   - the choice of topics to write about
   - the quality of the writing

4. What issues are likely to emerge from a program of journal writing?

Proposed Evaluation Activities

Resources available for evaluation were very limited. Only broad measures could be considered.

For each research question, evaluation activities were proposed as follows:

Question 1. The teachers' implementation and evaluation of the program.

Administer a questionnaire after the first few weeks and conduct an interview with each teacher at the end of the project.

Check progress at each presentation/discussion session and make visits to classrooms.

Question 2. The effects of the program on students' spelling, general writing ability, and scores on district language arts evaluation instruments.

Administer the Test of Written Spelling to each student in the program in September and in May.

Obtain a sample of each students' writing on an assigned topic in September and in May.

Obtain data from the Language sections of the Portland Achievement Levels Test administered in October and in May.

The Test of Written Spelling, (Larsen and Hammill, 1976) was chosen because it is a relatively recent test, was designed for grades 2 through 8, and requires a written response. According to its manual it is "easily administered," "thoroughly standardized," "has established reliability and validity," "extensively normed," and "it may be used with confidence to show what progress has been made during a term or year."

Question 3. The characteristics of children's work.

Obtain the written entry from each student's journal on a given day in January and on a given day in May.

Obtain from the classroom teachers a few examples of students' complete journals from September to May for examination and analysis during the summer of 1983.

Question 4. Issues in journal writing.

Obtain information from the teachers at each of the presentation/discussion sessions and from the interviews at the end of the year.

Implementation of the Project

Our ideas about journal writing came from our experiences in classrooms in both England and the United States over a number of years and the writing of many people, in particular: Daniel Fader (1966, 1976), A.B. Clegg (1964), James Moffett (1968), Peter Elbow (1973), and Jana Staton (1980). From all of these sources, during the summer of 1982, we compiled a 15 page handbook describing a set of procedures for beginning journal writing in the classroom.* The handbook recommended and gave specific suggestions and examples for each of the following:

1. A journal should be:
   - an open, honest record of the interesting events of a school year
   - a communication between student and teachers about events, feelings, and matters of importance

*During the year, two newsletters and several supplements to the handbook amounting to an additional 22 pages plus some instructional handouts for use during the presentation/discussions were prepared and distributed to the teachers. This report can only list topics presented. It cannot reproduce the detailed discussion and the examples given in the handbook.
At the completion of this report, the project staff anticipate a revision and extension of the handbook based upon the experience of this and other journal writing projects. Target date for the assembly of the revised handbook is March 1984. Inquiries may be addressed to the project staff at Portland State University.

- a chance to develop fluency and experiment with the content and form of written language.

2. Children should choose their own topics to write about and write a minimum of six sentences per day.

3. Each journal should have the day and date correctly spelled as a heading and the paragraphs should be indented.

4. Children should be encouraged to write legibly, to take some pride in the appearance of their work, to try to spell correctly, to attempt the spelling of all the words they need, and above all to get their message across. They should be told to write as well as they can, but that they will not be criticized or penalized in any way for misspelled words or difficulties with punctuation, capitalization, or usage.

5. Journals should be confidential communications between student and teacher. Nothing should be shared without permission of the student. A system should be devised for children to indicate entries which they do not want the teacher to read.

6. Teachers should establish a routine whereby they can read and respond in writing to each child's work as often as possible, preferably every day.

7. Teachers should respond to the content of what children write and respond constructively to their concerns.

8. Teachers should make note of instructional needs, establish priorities, and plan separate language lessons to help children gain fluency and power in expression and mastery of the conventions of written English.

That is, teachers should use journals diagnostically to decide when to teach topics from the existing language arts curriculum.

9. Children should be encouraged to illustrate each journal entry.

In the week before school began, a meeting was held for all interested teachers. Eleven of the twelve teachers of language arts in grades 5 through 8 attended and agreed to participate. The other teacher, a part-time teacher of a fifth/sixth grade section, could not attend the presentation/discussion sessions. She planned to use journals in her classroom but not become a fully participating member of the project.

A copy of the handbook was given to each teacher, and the recommended procedures were explained and discussed. Examples of a number of children's journal entries from other schools in other years were shown. An example of a complete journal bound in four volumes and written by a sixth-grade student in another Oregon school from September to June of the previous school year, complete with teacher's written comments in dialogue with the student, was displayed and passed around for all to see. Examples of a number of published journals such as The Diary of a Country Edwardian Lady by Edith Holden and The Journals of Lewis and Clark edited by John Bakeless were also displayed, discussed, and examined.

The eleven teachers each made their own decisions about the amount of time they were willing to allocate to journal writing and the routines they could establish. The project directors made visits by invitation to most classrooms to make suggestions about routines and procedures and to help students find suitable topics and express their thoughts in writing. A series of presentation/discussion sessions was held as planned and dealt with topics arising from classroom needs. Those topics were as follows:

Thursday, September 23, 3:30 pm.

1. Suggestions for improving the content of children's writing by sharing interesting examples of student's work with the entire class.

2. Guidelines for sharing children's work.

3. Improving content by reading selections from children's literature aloud to the class.

4. Improving fluency by timed writing periods, "derbies" e.g. write as much as you can in two minutes, in three minutes, etc.

5. Discussion of routines for writing, reading and responding, and questions of privacy.

Thursday, October 7, 3:30 pm.

1. Suggestions for children's self-diagnosis of handwriting.

2. Basic concepts of diagnostic teaching. What to look for. How to establish instructional priorities.

3. Improving content and mechanics by class discussion of children's journal entries displayed on the overhead projector.

Thursday, October 21, 3:30 pm.

1. Improving descriptive writing by the use of attribute guides.

2. Diagnostic teaching - the relationship between journal writing and the language arts curriculum.

3. Scheduling problems - finding time for journals.

4. Encouraging imaginative writing.

Thursday, November 4, 3:30 pm.

For this session the project staff wrote Newsletter #1 to review progress to date and restate some goals. Discussion topics were:

1. Ways of helping children improve paragraph structure.

2. An examination of some journal entries in which children had introduced or mentioned potentially interesting topics but had failed to develop them. We named these "Missed Opportunities," and suggested ways of encouraging more complete development.

3. The value of oral preparation.

4. Eight criteria by which journal entries, or any piece of student writing, are conventionally evaluated.

Thursday, December 2, 3:30 pm.

1. Suggestions for improving language: choosing "the right word." Careful observation and attention to detail.

2. Stages of development in journal writing?

Thursday, January 13, 3:30 pm.

At this and each of the remaining sessions we distributed supplements to the original handbooks containing an outline of topics for a complete year-long journal project and suggestions for several instructional activities.

1. Selecting features e.g. verbs, adjectives, adverbs, figurative language for special attention.

2. General discussion of progress and needs.

Thursday, February 3, 3:30 pm.

1. Audiences for journals - yourself? "posterity"? your teacher? children in other locations?

2. Sentence sense. Sentence combining. Ways of using journals to teach sentence combining.

3. Goals for the remainder of the year.

Thursday, February 24, 3:30 pm.

Newsletter #2 dealt with: (1) a review of the purposes for journals, (2) criteria for evaluating written work, (3) self-evaluation by means of a checklist, (4) diagnostic teaching, (5) helping children find topics which record national and local events and personal problems and preferences, (6) using journals to solve school problems, and (7) problems of usage and its relationship to oral language.

At this point most of the possibilities of journal writing of which we were aware had been introduced and discussed. Teachers appeared to be at ease with the project and familiar with its possibilities. We saw no need to continue the after-school sessions just for the sake of continuing, and there was no need for further review or discussion of topics that were already a familiar part of the language arts curriculum. The after-school sessions were therefore discontinued. One final session at 8 am on Thursday May 19, was devoted to procedures for the end of year evaluation.

It was difficult to arrange presentations at a time that was convenient to all teachers. Many had coaching commitments or responsibilities to school or district curriculum committees. Teachers who could not attend asked other teachers to acquaint them with the content of the meetings. Five, six, or seven teachers generally attended each session.

In October, two new teachers joined the staff, and the placement policies for the language arts sections in grades 5 through 8 were reviewed. Two additional sections were created for grades seven and eight. Classes were reorganized and a large number of students who had begun the year in one section with one teacher were transferred to a different section with another teacher. One of the new teachers joined the journal writing project. The other did not. From October therefore the school had fourteen language arts sections in grades 5 through 8. Twelve of these sections participated in the journal writing project.

The reorganization had little effect on the instructional aspects of the project. Since journal writing was a part of twelve of the fourteen language arts sections, children who were transferred from one section to another adapted quickly and easily to the slightly different routines and instructional emphasis of their new classrooms. However, the reorganization complicated some of the proposed evaluation activities and made data collection and analysis more difficult.

Evaluation Activities

Most teachers were very cooperative and carried out the evaluation activities as and when requested. Busy schedules made this difficult for some teachers especially at the end of the year. Some teachers chose not to participate in some or all of the evaluation tasks.

Table I indicates the extent of teachers' participation and presents an overview of the data available for analysis at the completion of the project.

TABLE I

Teachers' Participation in Evaluation Activities

Numbers of Items Received

Grade Levels:	Seven and Eight								Five and Six				Totals		
Teacher/Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	7&8	5&6	All Grades
Number of Students in Section in June	27	26	27	26	22	21	16	19	33	26	22	18	184	99	283
Test of Written Spelling															
Pre	9	18	24	19	18	17	15	18	22	18	15	8	138	63	201
Post	0	25	26	21	22	119	0	19	29	0	17	9	132	55	187
Written Language Sampling															
Pre	9	20	26	31	15	24	19	22	28	26	17	9	166	80	246
Post	0	25	13	25	19	20	0	15	30	0	16	0	117	46	163
January Journal	0	21	23	24	18	25	0	0	30	0	22	0	111	52	163
May Journal	0	26	27	24	21	18	15	0	30	0	18	16	131	64	195
Portland Levels Test: Language															
Pre: Oct. '82	27	24	26	26	22	19	15	18	26	24	17	11	177	78	255
Post: May '83	27	26	27	26	22	21	16	19	33	26	17	11	184	87	271
Number of Complete Journals Submitted for Evaluation	0	0	28	2	9	9	0	4	0	0	22	0	52	22	74
October Progress Report	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	4	8
June Interview	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*	Yes	Yes	Yes	7	3	10

* Teacher on leave of absence.

The remainder of this section uses the data base from Table I to report in greater detail on each of the four research questions.

Research Question 1. To what extent will teachers implement and value the program as a whole and each of its many parts?

Nine teachers responded to a detailed written questionnaire in October, one month after the project began. Eleven teachers participated in a sixty-minute structured interview with a member of the project staff at the end of the year. Tables II and III summarize the information from both sources. The eleven teachers who began the project in September and the one who joined it in October carried out some substantial form of journal writing throughout the year. Most teachers had students write journals every day. Teachers A, B, and C, the teachers of the top three sections of seventh and eighth grades, maintained journal writing as a required activity until January. After that they devoted their scheduled time to research papers, but allowed students the option of continuing journals as a voluntary activity if they wished. About half of their students continued voluntary journal writing, but only a small number continued to write every day. The lowest seventh/eighth grade section ceased to require journals after March. One fourth of the students in this class continued on a voluntary basis. Most classes devoted from ten to fifteen minutes per day and all reported they could easily have spent longer. Children were encouraged to illustrate, but only about half of them found time to do so regularly. Similarly, about half of the students made covers or bindings for their journals.

Most teachers attempted to respond in writing to student's journals regularly, say once a week, but only two teachers responded daily. Teachers found the burden of responding to be a heavy one. Those who did it daily found it laborious but very rewarding.

TABLE II-A

Program Implementation: Basic Routines - Grades Seven and Eight

Teacher/ Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Time spent on journals per day?	the first 10 - 15 minutes	the first 10 - 15 minutes	15 min. at begin. of period. Stu. wanted more	10 minutes at end of each period	the first 10 minutes	the first 10 - 15 minutes	15 minutes at beginning of period	the first 10 minutes
How many days per week?	every day	every day	every day	every day	every day	every day	once a week	four days a week
Which months of the year?	from Sept. until Jan. then optional	from Sept. until Jan. then optional	from Sept. until Jan. then optional	from Nov. to May	from Oct. until June	all year	all year	from Sept. to March then optional
Frequency of teacher's written response?	every week at first - then every 2-3 weeks.	most days	once a week, every weekend	every other entry	once a week	only occasionally at beginning of year	every third week	every day
Problems with privacy?	2 journals were "lost" 1 found later	none	none	none	none	none - same students stapled pgs. together	none	none

TABLE II-B

Program Implementation: Basic Routines - Grades Five and Six

Teacher/ Section	I	J	K	L
Time spent on journals per day?	the first 10 minutes	5 minutes at end of period	20 minutes at beginning of ea. period	10 minutes at end of period
How many days per week?	three times a week	3 - 5 days per week	every day	every day
Which months of the year?	all year	all year	all year	from Nov. until May
Frequency of teacher's written response?	once a week	every other journal	once a week	every other day
Problems with privacy?	none	none, child. indicated parts not to be read	none	none

TABLE II-C

Program Implementation: Supplementary Activities - Grades Seven and Eight

Teacher/Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Frequency of diagnostic lessons	none	every week	not needed	none	none	none	none	none
Frequency of assigned topics	none	none	none	I gave them a list	none	I gave them slogans	most days	occa-sionally
Frequency of illustra-tions	50%	50%	50%	not time for many	50%	most students	most students	50%
Frequency of timed writ-ing (derbies)	none	none	none	none	none	tried it for a few weeks	tried it for a few weeks	none
Frequency of books read aloud as models	none	none	none	none	none	none	read pub-lished journals	once a week
Frequency of sharing jour-nal entries with class	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	none
Frequency of rewriting	none	none	none	none	we tried it once	once a month	none	none
Frequency of use of over-head projector	none	none	none	twice	none	twice	none	none
Frequency of requirement of special feature	none	none	none	four or five	none	none	none	none
Frequency of use of check-lists by students	none	none	none	none	none	a few students used them	none	none
Number of students making journal covers or bindings	none	everyone made cover	most stu-dents made covers	some did	some did	none	some did	none

TABLE II-D

Program Implementation: Supplementary Activities - Grades Five and Six

Teacher/Section	I	J	K	L
Frequency of diagnostic lessons	none	occasionally	frequently for spelling & punctuation	none
Frequency of assigned topics	occasionally give them quotes	occasionally	quite often	they had a list for ideas
Frequency of illustra-	50% - not enough time	very little - not enough time	every day - crayons are best	50%
Frequency of timed writing (derbies)	none	for several weeks	for a few weeks	none
Frequency of Books read aloud as models	none	none	quite often	none
Frequency of sharing journal entries with class	none	none	very often most days	four or five times
Frequency of rewriting	none	twice	six times	none
Frequency of use of overhead projector	none	twice	occasionally	twice
Frequency of requirement of special feature	occasionally	occasionally (four or five times)	four or five times	several times
Frequency of use of checklist by students	none	none	none	none
Number of students making journal covers or bindings	some students did	most students	most students	some students did

TABLE III-A

Program Evaluation: Appropriateness of Journals - Grades Seven and Eight

Teacher/Section	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
What is the main emphasis in your language arts curriculum?	Accuracy in writing. Convey ideas. Research paper. Paragraphs.	Grammar. Sentence construction. Paragraphs. Research paper.	The state curriculum. Parts of speech. Writing.	Good grammar spoken and written. Unity. Coherence. Themes and paragraphs.	Grammar. Parts of speech. Research paper. Paragraphs.	Grammar. Skills. Term papers.	Grammar. Paragraphs. Spelling. Sentences.	Sentences. Parts of speech. Minimum skills.
Would you use journals again?	Only for exceptional students.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
At what levels are journals most suitable?	Don't know.	5 - 8	Mainly 4, 5, and 6	4 - 8	Definitely 6, 7, and 8	4 - 8	4 - 8	7 and 8
Comments.	Time is a problem. Teacher responses are a burden. Good for students who care. An opportunity to express thoughts.	I didn't make it important enough. They enjoyed re-reading at end of year. Good chance to speak out.	A marvelous way to get acquainted. Teacher should write too. They cared. It was worthwhile.	Provides good writing practice for concepts being taught.	It forced them to write. I was really pleased.	A good settling activity. Valuable. You get a good idea of students and what you need to teach.	Useful. Needs more time. Good for self expression. Might encourage bad habits.	It needs more time. Useful. A great way to learn about kids. I talked to them a lot about their journals.

TABLE III-B

Program Evaluation: Appropriateness of Journals - Grades Four and Five

Teacher/Section	I*	J	K	L
What is the main emphasis in your language arts curriculum?	-	Parts of speech.	Vocabulary. Composition. Parts of speech. Grammar.	Grammar. Themes.
Would you use journals again?	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
At what levels are journals most suitable?	-	6, 7 and 8	4 - 8	4 - 8
Comments.	-	Very good for descriptive writing. Important.	Children do write. It is a useful diagnostic tool.	It is hard to maintain interest.

*This teacher took a leave of absence in May and was not available for final interview.

Though the basic routines were very well accepted, very few of the supplementary activities were used with any regularity. Teachers reported obtaining useful diagnostic information from students' journals but very few teachers used this information for establishing instructional priorities or the immediate teaching of needed skills. Only three teachers read books aloud to the class to provide models of good writing. Only one teacher encouraged members of the class to share journals with each other on a regular basis. Very little use was made of:

- self checklists - for students to check that journals were complete
- overhead transparencies - for teaching sentence construction
- timed writing "derbies" - to increase fluency
- rewriting - to teach proofreading
- the use of special features such as adverbs, figures of speech - to improve expression

In summary, all of the teachers implemented the basic routines, and all except one valued them highly. Two experienced teachers who had never used journals before regretted not knowing about their use as a school activity years ago. However, to judge from the little attention they received, very few teachers used or saw much value in the supplementary activities recommended by the program.

Research Question 2. What effects will the program have on children's spelling, general writing ability, and performance on district language arts evaluation instruments?

A. Spelling

Journal writing does not set out to teach spelling. It encourages both correct spelling and invented spelling. It is tolerant towards children's unsuccessful attempts to spell difficult or unfamiliar words. Most teachers in this study included some time for spelling somewhere in their language arts lessons. Most

presented a spelling program quite independent of the words students misspelled in their journals. Some, quite systematically used words misspelled in journals for their spelling lessons. Because journal writing is tolerant of spelling mistakes and usually makes no provision for the systematic correction of misspelled words, some teachers occasionally express concern that journal writing may contribute towards a deterioration in children's spelling.

To find out whether this concern is justified we asked teachers to administer the Test of Written Spelling to each child in September and again in late May.* The Test of Written Spelling contains two word lists. The first is a list of 35 "predictable" words. The second is a list of 25 "unpredictable" words. The test reports grade level equivalents and spelling ages for each list and for the total score on the combined lists. Tests were administered by the language arts teachers during language arts lessons. The tests were scored twice, once by the classroom teacher and once by the project staff. The teachers of sections A and J gave no post-tests. The teacher of section G gave a teacher-made post-test which does not allow comparisons to be made. The teacher of section L administered only the first part of the test, the list of predictable words. The results are displayed in Table IV, Summary of Spelling Scores.

The test was too easy for the most able students. Many individual students in the highest ability sections made perfect scores on the pre tests. The pre-test mean of the four most able sections was above 9th grade level, the highest grade equivalent reported in the test administration manual. This left no room for some students and some sections to show improvement. In every case, for every section,

*Because sections were reorganized in October after the pre-tests had been taken, and because not all of the teachers administered all of the tests, all sections have some missing data. Some students were in a section at the beginning of the year which did not give the pre-tests. For purposes of comparison, pre-test and post-test means are computed only for those students for whom both pre- and post-test scores are available.

TABLE IV

Summary of Spelling Scores
Mean Scores and Grade Equivalents

Teacher Section	N^1	N^2	Pre-Tests Means				Post-Tests Means			
			Predictable	Unpredictable	Total	Grade Equiv.	Predictable	Unpredictable	Total	Grade Equiv.
A	27	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B	26	18	34.6	23.3	57.9	>9.0	34.8	24.3	59.1	>9.0
C	27	22	34.0	22.4	56.4	>9.0	34.8	24.0	58.8	>9.0
D	26	15	33.5	21.9	55.4	>9.0	34.1	23.3	57.4	>9.0
E	22	18	32.4	19.2	51.6	8.8	32.8	20.4	53.2	>9.0
F	21	15	32.8	19.7	52.5	8.8	33.3	21.3	54.6	>9.0
G	16	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
H	19	18	31.1	15.4	46.5	6.6	31.7	18.9	50.6	8.5
I	33	19	32.9	21.4	54.3	>9.0	33.8	23.0	56.8	>9.0
J	26	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K	22	15	25.3	10.6	35.9	4.7	29.1	15.3	44.4	5.9
L	18	7	22.7	-	-	3.9	26.0	-	-	5.1

N^1 = Number of students in this section at end of year.

N^2 = Number of students for whom both pre- and post-test scores are available.

Means are computed only for N^2.

Sections A and J gave no post-tests. Section G gave a teacher-made post-test which does not permit comparisons to be made.

Sections L omitted the test of unpredictable words.

post-test means for raw scores were higher than pre-test means. For the three sections of lowest ability, gains of 1.9 years, 1.2 years and 1.2 years were reported for the period from September to May.

Taken as a whole over a period of nine months, the data indicate gains in spelling in every journal writing class ranging from slight to almost two years. In no case did journal writing classes show any deterioration in spelling performance.

B. General Writing Ability

Journal writing gives students frequent and regular practice in written expression on topics within their own experience and of their own choice. In every case it is an opportunity for students to apply with some regularity all of the concepts, the niceties of form, and the conventions of written expression that are taught throughout the language arts curriculum. Some teachers gain important diagnostic information from the journals and relate their language arts lessons specifically to this information. Others teach their language arts lessons independently of the journals. In this study, as was reported above, many teachers obtained diagnostic information from students' journals but few planned lessons as an immediate result. Journal writing classes probably do not differ very much from conventional classes in the amount of instruction provided on the conventions of written expression. Journal writing classes, however, probably differ from most conventional language arts classes quite considerably in the amount and frequency of writing students do on topics of their own choice. We were interested in the possible effects of journal writing on students' general writing ability.

As a measure of general writing ability, we asked teachers to collect a sample of written language on an assigned topic from each student in September and again in May. For each of the grade levels five, six, seven, and eight, we chose a pair of similar topics we thought would be interesting to students. In

September we asked each teacher to assign Topic A to half the class and Topic B to the other half. Then in May we asked the students who had written on Topic A to write on Topic B and vice versa.

The topics were as follows:

Grade Five

Topic A The Best TV Show I've Ever Seen.
Topic B The Worst TV Show I've Ever Seen.

Grade Six

Topic A Which Are Best? Video Games or Outdoor Sports?
Topic B Which Are Best? Video Games or Movies?

Grade Seven

Topic A An Old Friend.
Topic B A New Friend.

Grade Eight

Topic A The Best Day of the Year.
Topic B The Worst Day of the Year.

We are well aware of the limitations of a single topic on a single day as a measure of individual growth (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, 1963). However, limitations based on the known variability of an individual's writing may not always apply to groups. It is reasonable to expect that in a sizeable group individual differences may cancel each other out. If some children are having an off day, statistically just as many are likely to be doing particularly well. We therefore chose to examine differences in pre- and post-test mean scores for each of the language arts sections and for the entire group. There will of course be times when a set of circumstances or a school event on a single day or at a particular time of year may affect the performance of the entire group.

The pre-tests were given in September and then filed until May. The post-tests were given in May. When every pre- and post-writing sample had been

collected, each was marked with a color code for each section and numbered to assure anonymity during evaluation, yet make identification possible after evaluation.

We used a holistic scoring procedure (Myers, 1980). About eighty writing samples were randomly set aside from the entire set of pre- and post-samples. The two project directors then read each of these and placed them in one of eight categories from a low of 1 to a high of 8. From each category we selected a typical example to serve as an anchor paper for that category. We then read every writing sample, compared it with the anchor papers and gave it a rating of 1 through 8. When the two raters disagreed, a graduate student in education was asked to make another independent rating using the same anchor papers. These papers were assigned their median rating.

The results are reported in Table V.

On a scale of 1, low, to 8, high, the total group improved from a pre-test mean score 3.46 to a post-test mean score of 4.32. However, improvements were not recorded for every section.

The three highest ability sections for whom data are available, A, B, and I, did not show improvement. The lowest ability sections tended to show the greatest gains. We have no firm explanation for this. It does not appear to be a simple regression effect. The pre-test means of the highest ability groups were not particularly high. There was plenty of opportunity for improvement. We note that the highest ability groups wrote fewer journals in the second semester because of the time spent on research papers. Thus, the lack of daily practice could account for the lower scores. Other explanations are: (1) that the post-tests were given at a very busy time in the last few days of the school year - a poor time for careful and sustained attention to writing. This is particularly

TABLE V

Evaluation of Written Language Samples

Teacher/Section	N^1	N^2	Pre-Test Means	Post-Test Means
A	27	0	-	-
B	26	18	4.94	4.50
C	27	11	5.18	4.91
D	26	14	4.43	5.50
E	22	13	2.00	3.00
F	21	18	2.56	5.36
G	16	0	-	-
H	19	13	2.46	3.00
I	33	20	4.00	3.90
J	26	0	-	-
K	22	13	1.77	3.46
L	18	0	-	-
Totals	283	120	3.46	4.32

N^1 = Total number of students enrolled in this section in May.

N^2 = Total number of students for whom both pre- and post-test scores are available.

Means are computed only for N^2.

true in this school in this year because the entire school is being reorganized from a K-8 elementary school to a 5-8 middle school, and both students and faculty are somewhat unsettled by the impending change. (2) that students participate in a number of district-wide evaluation activities at this time of year and that this particular activity may have received less attention than the others because less was at stake.

Despite the poor showings of the three highest ability sections, the remaining five sections made comparatively strong gains and the total group at least made modest gains in general writing ability.

C. Performance on District Language-Arts Evaluation Instruments

Portland Public Schools routinely administers a test of Language Usage in October and in May. It is a carefully constructed paper and pencil multiple choice test developed from district language arts goals. It reports Rasch calibrated, or RIT, scores, an equal-interval scale reporting continuous progress across grades three through nine from which growth may be inferred; and P-Scores, standard scores, by which individual students' standings are compared with others of the same grade level. The Rasch (RIT) scale extends roughly from 140 to 260. P-Scores range from below 30 to above 70 with a mean of 50. Thus a steady increase in RIT scores is expected each year. An increase in P-Scores means that a group has improved its standing in comparison with other Portland schools.

The results for the journal writing sections are displayed in Table VI.*

*The means in this table have been computed from reports provided by the evaluation department of Portland Public Schools. The director of evaluations was given a draft of this report and has informed us that the P-Score values were taken from the 1981-82 year and may not be an accurate reflection of comparative standings for the 1982-83 school year. The evaluation department confirms that during the 1982-83 school year, the students in grades 5 through 8 at Robert Gray School scored well above district norms on the language tests at both the beginning and the end of the year and maintained their comparatively high standing in the district.

TABLE VI
Portland Achievement Levels Test - Language
Means and Ranges for RIT Scores and P-Scores

Teacher/ Section	N		RIT Pre/Oct.	RIT Post/May	Gain/ Loss	P-Scores Pre/Oct.	P-Scores Post/May	Gain/ Loss
A	23	Mean	233.3	244.1	+7.8	67.1	70.3	+3.2
		Range	224 - 245	235 - 253		59 - 73	63 - 78	
B	22	Mean	228.8	238.0	+9.2	61.0	66.5	+5.5
		Range	217 - 249	224 - 251		52 - 77	55 - 77	
C	26	Mean	223.1	232.7	+9.6	56.9	62.3	+5.4
		Range	213 - 235	219 - 251		49 - 65	51 - 76	
D	26	Mean	223.8	233.5	+9.7	58.6	64.2	+5.6
		Range	216 - 239	220 - 246		51 - 69	51 - 77	
E	21	Mean	215.1	222.1	+7.0	51.1	53.9	+2.8
		Range	205 - 223	210 - 234		43 - 57	45 - 65	
F	19	Mean	218.8	224.1	+5.3	54.1	58.5	+4.4
		Range	213 - 230	213 - 236		49 - 63	46 - 67	
G	14	Mean	209.8	214.4	+4.6	47.4	48.0	+ .6
		Range	197 - 220	201 - 223		37 - 54	36 - 54	
H	18	Mean	211.7	218.3	+6.6	49.4	51.8	+2.4
		Range	203 - 222	207 - 229		42 - 57	41 - 61	
I	26	Mean	221.2	228.7	+7.5	59.8	64.3	+4.5
		Range	215 - 230	219 - 239		55 - 68	56 - 74	
J	24	Mean	212.2	217.6	+5.4	54.5	60.0	+5.5
		Range	200 - 219	205 - 232		45 - 61	45 - 66	
K	17	Mean	204.0	213.5	+9.5	48.6	52.5	+2.9
		Range	198 - 211	199 - 222		46 - 56	45 - 61	
L	11	Mean	198.5	202.1	+3.6	45.8	44.5	-1.3
		Range	192 - 210	171 - 216		41 - 52	23 - 54	

N = Number of students in each section for whom both pre- and post-test scores are available.

According to the Achievement Level Test reports, eleven of the twelve journal writing sections improved their P-Score means from 0.6 to 5.6 points from October to May. One section showed a drop of 1.3 points.

While it is not possible to relate these substantial gains on a test of Language Usage, primarily a test of editing and proofreading skills, directly to the journal writing program, the influence of journal writing cannot be entirely ruled out. At the very least, journal writing activities of the kind described here, do not appear to interfere with the healthy development of editing and proofreading skills. It is quite possible that the extensive amount of personal writing that students are called upon to do and the number of writing decisions they must make every day, increase their familiarity with written language in ways which contribute towards the development of editing and proofreading skills.

Research Question 3. What are the characteristics of children's work?

In January and in May, we asked each teacher to collect and turn in each child's journal for a given day. This gave us two cross-sections or "slices" of the journal writing across all twelve language arts sections.

We looked at each "slice", class by class, and made diagnostic notes for each teacher which we reported to teachers during the regular presentation/discussion sessions.

At the end of the year, we asked teachers to borrow a selection of their students' complete journals for us to examine over the summer. Six teachers were successful in borrowing journals. From these teachers we received, 2, 4, 9, 9, 22, and 28 journals for examination.

From these two sources, the "slices", and the complete journals, we compiled a description of the characteristics of children's work.

During the year, we had discussed and encouraged the teachers to pay attention to the following ten criteria:

A. Content
B. Language
C. Organization - Paragraph Construction
D. Organization - Sentence Construction
E. Mechanics of Capitalization and Punctuation
F. Usage
G. Spelling
H. Handwriting
I. Format
J. Illustrations

We were also interested in K, teacher's written responses and examples of teacher/student dialogue. Accordingly we describe the journals under those eleven headings. Because of the nature of journal writing, we gave students our assurance that we would return their journals at the end of the summer and not publicize complete entries without their permission. Our comments are therefore limited and general in nature.

A. Content

Children wrote about their friends, their families, a variety of sports, video games, movies, T.V., parties, weekends, pets, vacations, doctors and dentists, aches and pains, (hunger - the seventh and eighth grade language arts sections met last period of a long morning right before lunch!), grades, clothes, homework, teachers, music lessons, rock groups, home computers, shopping, and dreams. In the early stag s, some complained about writing journals, it was "dumb", and some said they had nothing to write about. These complaints surfaced again occasionally but diminished during the year. One boy wrote consistently and effectively about the projects he was working on in shop class. Another boy, all year long, complained about being bored. Once or twice children retold a joke. A few children occasionally attempted a poem, usually one of the structured kind encouraged in language arts texts - cinquain, accrostic, or limerick. There were frequent detailed accounts of sports events, rock concerts, and video games.

Of the twelve journals we examined closely, the longest contained 149 entries. Almost all of these entries were half a page or more and some exceeded a full page. The shortest contained only 15 entries, mostly single sentences, although the class had been writing journals from September to March. Students in those classes which required journals only during the first semester averaged between 50 and 60 entries. Those who wrote for the entire year averaged from 100 to 120 entries. Most students produced the requested six sentences per day or about half a page.

B. Language

We describe the language as colloquial - appropriately so. Most students seemed to us to be writing much as they would speak. Consequently, most of the examples of figurative language were sports clichés: "they murdered us", "we got creamed", "it was a blast". Although there were some commendable exceptions:

> "I had a huge burger about as big as my face...covered with drippy cheese." "...slower than a winter without food." "The trigger of our break-up."

We encountered an occasional obscenity.

> A few seventh and eighth graders experiemented with "valley talk." "The weekend was totally great - I scored a totally awesome goal - all I did was catch a grossed-out cold." (All from one entry.)

For a while, some sixth graders tried their hand at what they called "jive talk." "Shoo man! Do you love yo Mama? Ef yous don' you ain't no fren o'mine. I just love Eddie Murphy. He's so symmetrical."

The predominant mode was narrative with little elaboration or description. There were a few examples of humor, mainly through imagination or exaggeration:

"I completely hate A.B. and C.D. They are being the biggest brats of history...My mom let me out of the closet last night at 10 o'clock. I was in there because I got a C+ on my Social Studies test.

My leg is getting better. My parents installed padded walls in my room yesterday. They say I shouldn't be so hyperactive and not be like a superball.

This is all a joke, except for the first paragraph."

"Next week is another 4-day week because of the tragic end of the grading period."

C. Organization - Paragraph Construction

We detect a progression from a series of unrelated sentences in the early journal entries to unified narrative paragraphs by mid year. Paragraphs tend to be very similar. A topic sentence either introduces or concludes a series of similar narrative sentences. Many of the longer entries are split appropriately into two or three separate paragraphs. While a few individuals switch rapidly from one topic to another, sentence by sentence, most children seem to have either an intuitive or learned awareness of conventional paragraph structure.

D. Organization - Sentence Construction

Many children wrote more than the target of six stentences. Short, simple sentences easily outnumbered all others. Complex sentences containing a depend-end clasuse introduced by because, when, then, and if, were frequent. Compound sentences joined by and, and but were also frequent but not as numerous as complex sentences. Compound/complex sentences were rare. We encountered only two in a sub sample of forty journal entries:

"I love the beach because there are no pressures and everything is relaxed."

"Last night I got a call from my soccer coach and he said I couldn't be on the team any more because I was the last person to register and we have one to (sic) many people on the team."

Most sentences were simple declarative statements. We encountered several rhetorical questions:

"guess what happened yesterday?"

"Can you believe this?"

Exclamations were quite common. We found an occasional imperative:

"Don't tell my parents."

"Remind me not to let out anything too personal or everyone will know."

Oral rhetoric seems to produce a natural and sufficient variety of sentence patterns. Reading the journals, we occasionally came across a succession of sentences of almost identical structure, but we rarely considered the lack of variety in sentences to be a serious problem. It did not interfere with communication. We were left with the overwhelming impression that these children's greatest need is the frequent experimentation and exploration of alternative sentence constructions with an adult who is more sympathetic to the message being conveyed than solely to matters of form. Form follows content. Form enhances content. Form does not dictate content. Children whose work was confused or disjointed seemed to us to be suffering more from an uncertainty of subject than of form. They simply did not have anything vital to write about. In Donald Graves' phrase, they had not found their "voice." (Graves 1983).

E. Capitalization and Punctuation

Most children handled capitalization and punctuation confidently and appropriately. The commonest difficulty was the run-on sentence, particularly the comma splice:

"Today has been a great day so far, I hope it stays that way."

"I love planes they are fun."

A few individual children do experience considerable difficulty with sentence sense. In their cases the syntax is usually acceptable, but conventional punctuation symbols are absent or incorrect.

"Now my dad he's nice one thing he never cleans up after himself, when he takes a bath he brings in chips and my brother loves chips he is a baby! he is a baby! he gets in there and throws them around and guess who has to clean it you, Me! I tell my mother about that I did not leave the chips in the bathroom and then Mom talks to Dad she tells him to clean up the mess he said OK OK I will do it but dose he do it no way..."

The capitalization of proper nouns and proper adjectives is well understood by some children but causes difficulty for others. Confusions and misunderstandings about punctuation seem to be a highly individual matter.

We found commas appropriately used for a number of purposes: direct address, items in a list, appositives, and introductory independent clauses. We also found question marks, exclamation marks, apostrophes, and quotation marks correctly employed. However, in a sample of over a thousand journal entries from forty students in grades five through eight, we failed to find a single example of the semi-colon or the colon.

F. Usage

Our standards for usage are generally consistent with those recommended by Pooley (1974). After reading several hundred journal entries, our dominant impression was that a small number of items from a small number of students accounted for the majority of instances of non-standard usage. The written work of most students conformed to standard English usage most of the time. To examine

this impression we took a sample of sixty journal entries, three randomly chosen entries from each of twenty complete journals, and recorded each instance of non-standard usage.

We have excluded three of these journal entries from our summary because they were the work of one recent Southeast Asian immigrant and contained more instances of non-standard usage than the remainder of the entire sample, and most of those instances were idiosyncratic and not typical of the group as a whole. Ten students showed no instances of inappropriate usage. Among the twenty-seven entries of the remaining nine students, we found twenty-six examples of non-standard usage as follows:

Nine examples of the misuse of the words pretty and fun:

a fun summer
the most fun place to go
it was pretty fun

Three examples of naming oneself first:

me and Andy

One of these examples was also the misuse of the pronoun "me" as the subject of the sentence.

Three examples of the misuse of good and bad as adverbs:

I miss her bad
didn't do very good
doing pretty good

Three examples of the omission of ed past-tense endings:

we got dress
yesterday I help my mom
he ask the man

All of these were from the same student.

Two examples of "of" for "have":

could of
it wouldn't of mattered

One example of "are" for "our":

I am optimistic about are soccer game.
In the same entry, "we will try our best," was correctly written

Two examples of lack of agreement between subject and verb:

there is nine players
there is three beds

Both of these were from the same student.

Two examples of problems with negatives:

there wouldn't be no cavities
everybody wouldn't be sick

Both of these were from the same entry.

One example of "kind of":

kind of floated away

Though the sample is small the indications are that problems with usage, like problems with punctuation, are individual rather than group matters.

G. Spelling

Our main concerns were that students would be willing to attempt the spelling of every word they needed without fear of criticism and that they would be attentive to the spelling of all words and try to spell correctly. We therefore expected to find generally correct spelling but a certain number of errors on unfamiliar and unpredictable words. There were fewer errors than we initially anticipated. There were enough misspellings, for example: priministir Begin, 20th senchery, eleagal drugs, not subbost to, to convince us that students were

willing to attempt the spelling of unfamiliar words, and we encountered journal after journal on a variety of topics with every word correctly spelled.

Categories of difficulty in approximate order were:

1. Homonyms

   their there
   one won
   write wright right
   I don't no
   waisting money
   of coarse
   to too

2. Double consonants

   roler skating
   he slaped me
   we went swiming

3. The ie and ei combinations

   preist
   recieving
   wierd

One fairly good speller, in the same week misspelled exactlly and absolutelly.

Another consistently used wh in place of w, whatch, whent, but was the only person in his section with this particular difficulty.

Another student was the only one in his section who frequently confused the order of letters:

a piar of thoes boots.

Therefore, apart from a small number of categories of words which account for a large proportion of spelling errors, spelling needs, like those of sentence mechanics and usage, were very much individual matters.

H. Handwriting

Inspection of a number of complete journals produced the following observations:

Journal writing demands a fluent hand. There is a concern that the need for fluency may bring about a deterioration in the general appearance and legibility of the entries. We found that in this project this was not the case. In the fifth and sixth grade particularly we found marked improvements in fluency as the year went by. We found children whose slope was very uneven at the beginning of the year acquired consistency with daily practice. A few children wrote in a manuscript hand. In this project, the manuscript writers tended to write less and to have more inconsistencies of slope and of letter form than students who used a conventional cursive hand.

We did find a pattern in some classes in which early journal entries were very neatly written and a general deterioration in appearance followed after the first few weeks. Then, as time went by, appearance and legibility improved at least to a satisfactory standard. Perhaps this was attributable to some timely classroom lessons on handwriting, or perhaps it was because teachers were reading and responding regularly to the content of children's work.

Many of the journals are an impressive collection of fluent and legible handwriting of very good appearance sustained over an entire year.

1. Format

Most kinds of writing, especially practical, public, writing are expected to follow a familiar format. Even though journals are personal writing, we thought it was important to establish the habit of using a simple format every day. The format we recommended was a familiar one:

> Day and date correctly spelled at the top of the page.
> An identation at the beginning and for each paragraph.
> A capital letter and appropriate end mark for each sentence.

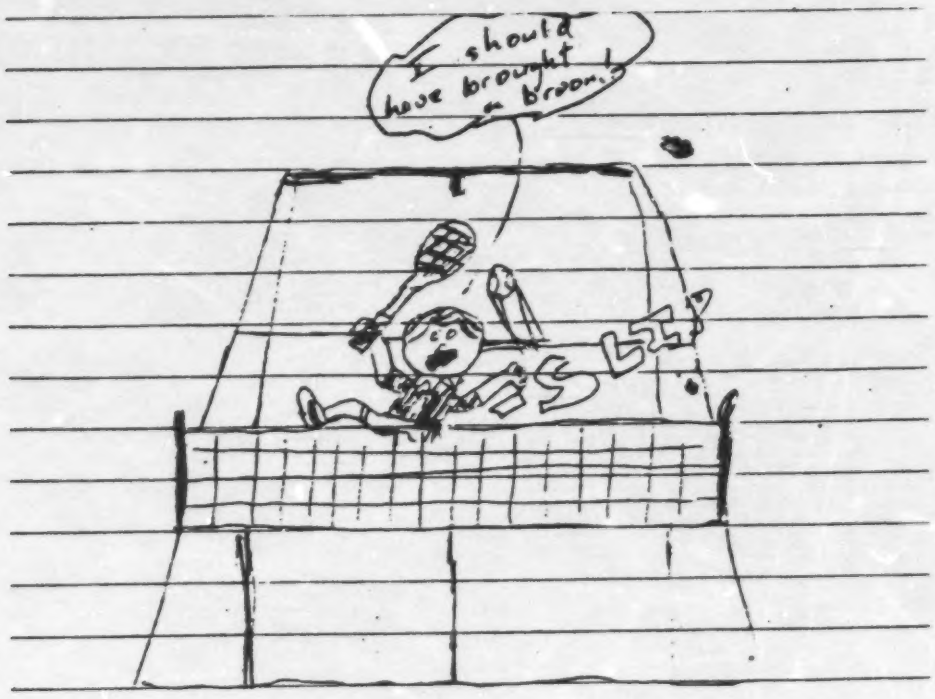
Greetings such as Dear Diary, a complimentary closing, and a signature were optional.

With very few exceptions the habit became well established and journal entries followed the recommended format throughout the year. In some sections some students wrote the date in numerals 10/12/82 rather than spelling the day and date Tuesday, October 12, 1982 as suggested. A majority of the students chose to use a greeting such as Dear Diary, Dear Inky, or Dear Zeus, and to sign their names at the end.

J. Illustrations

We began the year by encouraging each child to decorate his journal every day with crayon illustrations or designs in two or three colors. We did this because we had experienced excellent examples of illustrated journals in the past. We believed that color, design, and illustrations enhanced the appearances of the journals, contributed to the content, encouraged children to take pride in the appearance as well as the content of their work, and that illustration itself is a worthwhile problem-solving activity which should be encouraged. We still hold those views, but we recognize that they are more appropriate for homerooms than that for a separate subjects curriculum. All of the students in this study were in a separate subjects curriculum. Only a limited time was allotted daily for all of the language arts. The writing of the journals alone took approximately one-third of the total time available, and teachers did not believe they could justify asking students to spend any more time on illustrations. The illustrations there did not live up to our original expectations.

Many of the students made no attempt to illustrate. There were more attempts from students in grades five and six than from those in grades seven and eight. The commonest form of illustration was a cartoon style line drawing done with the same pen the student had used for his journal.



Some students occasionally made crayon drawings.

A few students used felt colored pens from time to time. We had discouraged this because, as we had expected, the colors are too strong for the small space of a journal. The ink is often absorbed by the paper, makes blurred edges, and shows through on the other side.

K. Teachers' Written Responses and Teacher/Student Dialogue

The frequency of teachers' written responses varied from daily, through every other day, once a week, and once every three weeks, to none at all. One teacher collected the journals once a week but wrote a brief comment beside the entry for each day. This practice is misleading because the student does not see the teachers' comments until the end of each week yet appears to be ignoring them.

Many comments were limited to one or two words or a short sentence: "True," "Sounds wonderful!" "I wish I could be there." Most of the comments followed the guidelines established at the beginning of the year. Teachers showed their acceptance and encouragement of students' thoughts by responding to the content of their work and refraining from criticism or evaluation of its form.

There were very few examples of genuine dialogue extending longer than two days. In many cases, like the examples given above, the teachers' comments though interesting and supportive, simply did not invite dialogue. Some students responded fairly regularly to the teacher not as part of a new journal entry but by writing a few brief words beneath the teacher's comment. Some teachers wrote questions to students day after day without ever getting a response. In one case over a period of several weeks the teacher's comments were consistently longer than the student's entries.

Without a written response from the student, without dialogue, it is often difficult to discover what effect, if any, the teacher's comments had. The following exchange is interesting and typical.

Journal entry Oct. 14 Thursday

I hate you because you blame me of everything and you said that I was bad in this class but I don't see how that could be true because I aint bad in art.

Teacher's response:

I feel bad that you don't like me because I like you. However I'm glad you feel you can say what you feel.

Next Journal entry:

Oct. 15 Friday

On Friday I said to my friend at 9:15 school will be out in 6 hours when school got out I reminded him about when I said that and he laughed.

Teacher's response:

I laughed too!

One wonders. Is the teacher forgiven now? Has her response helped to put the relationship back on friendly terms? Or was it ignored?

Research Question 4. What issues are likely to emerge from a program of journal writing?

Throughout the year, participation by the faculty in the presentation/discussion sessions exerted an important formative influence on the project. Sessions usually began with some procedural suggestions from the project staff followed by a time for open discussion and inquiry. Within the general guidelines of the project, experimentation was encouraged. As a result, matters arose on which opinions among group members differed from time to time or changed throughout the year as experience was gained. We have called these matters issues and summarized them under four main headings: A. Audience; B. Improvement of Content; C. Editing, Proofreading, and Rewriting; and D. Diagnostic Teaching and the Relationship Between Journals and the Writing Curriculum.

A. Audience

In a presentation on Learning to Read Like a Writer at the 1983 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, Frank Smith in a light-hearted

pairing of genres with their audiences spoke of diaries - to be concealed. In other words, the audience for a diary is the writer. We began the year by asking students to write for themselves in the future - to keep a record of the typical, the unusual, the important, and the interesting thoughts and events of the year - a memoir. At times we also suggested future audiences - your children, your grandchildren, "posterity?", the time-capsule idea. We were not completely satisfied with this direction. For many children the vagueness and remoteness of this audience provided little reason for writing.

At one time, in an attempt to encourage more descriptive writing and more careful observation of detail, we asked the students to write about the events of their lives in Portland, Oregon, for the benefit of people in other places; eastern Oregon, the Oregon coast, or places much further afield such as Fairbanks, Tokyo, Moscow, Paris, London, or Buenos Aires. As pen pal activities these ideas might have worked well, but for journal writing they were artificial. They lacked an authentic audience. The message went in one direction only. There was no communication.

At the beginning of the year we used the terms diary and journal synonymously and interchangeably. By mid year we had ceased to use the word diary and were consistently using the word journal, a word with a more public connotation. At about this time too we began to encourage the use of journals as a problem-solving tool and as a means of self-discovery. We did not encourage children to write intensely personal private concerns that they were unwilling to reveal. We gave them the option of marking some pages they preferred not to have read, but if these pages became too numerous we were prepared to suggest that they keep them separate as a voluntary, personal, writing activity, and find other topics for their school journals that they would be willing to share with their teachers. Even though no one did this, it was not a satisfactory arrangement either.

We had more success when we invited children to explore school and personal problems through their journals: The trouble with social studies is...You gave us too much homework last night...I worked harder on my report than Susan but you gave her a B and I only got a C+...I hate sitting next to...

We did not wish to encourage a mere catalogue of complaints. We were much more interested in having students identify and describe problems and explore possible solutions. As we considered the full implications of this new direction, we began to define a new and much more active participatory role for the teacher. The obvious fact we had overlooked until this time was that the teacher is not only one of many possible audiences but by far the most appropriate audience. We began to appreciate the motivational and developmental possibilities of turning one-way journals into two-way communications. We discovered the importance of dialogue. Journals can be approached with the expectation that there will be an informative and helpful response.

Unfortunately these ideas came a little too late to take root. The selection of journal topics by students had become fairly routine. Only a few students took up our invitation to explore problems and solutions. Teachers' reading and responding patterns had also become established, and few of them, especially at this stage of the year, were inclined to suggest new directions which would dramatically increase the time they would need to spend reading and responding to the students' journals. A dialogue role places far greater demands on teachers than the role of encouraging though observant bystanders.

For some teachers the question of audience in journal writing is always likely to remain an issue. For us, at the completion of this project, it was an issue no longer. The audience is the teacher. The journal is a dialogue. The dialogue embraces all of the other possible uses of a journal and adds much

more. The subject matter of journals clearly remains under the control of the student. At the end of any year, a journal can still remain a memoir, a worthwhile and even an aesthetic keepsake. It may be a record of events, thoughts, problems, and solutions, and also a record of a relationship, a valued partnership with a teacher.

B. Improvement of Content

To what extent, if any, should teachers attempt to help students improve the content of their journal writing? We were surprised when this issue surfaced. From the beginning, we assumed that journal writing would be evaluated at least informally by the teachers and would be one of several sources teachers would use to diagnose students' needs in order to provide appropriate help. But when we began to suggest improvements to the content of students' journal writing, differences of opinion became apparent. Specifically we had taken an example of a student describing his ride to school on a bicycle. We showed how by being asked to pay greater attention to detail and the introduction of figurative language, he had enhanced the quality of his original writing. An objection was raised that journals should be scrupulously honest accounts of students' experiences and that to encourage the kind of elaboration we had suggested would distort the accuracy of their accounts. Since this was journal writing it should maintain some kind of honest spontaneity. The counter argument here is that there is nothing dishonest in asking a student to take a moment to observe carefully, to pay close attention to detail, and to choose the best possible language to convey his inoughts. We support the counter argument, the latter line of reasoning, and approve of attempts to teach students to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the content of journals.

C. Editing, Proofreading, and Rewriting

At the beginning of the year, we encouraged the formal editing, proofreading,

and rewriting of selected journals. We did this because we thought that journal writing was as much in need of revision as any other form of spontaneous, first-draft writing, and we wished to maintain at least a reasonably careful attitude towards the writing. Most teachers accepted this point of view. Although the majority of teachers chose not to carry out editing, proofreading, and rewriting with students, it was not because they were opposed to the idea. It was simply because they could not afford the time to do it.

As the year went by, we modified our original thoughts. We are strongly in favor of diagnostic teaching as described in both sections B. and D. However, assuming that journals are only one of the many writing activities in a classroom, and that editing, proofreading and rewriting are happening in a number of appropriate and necessary places, we see no need for taking the time for the routine rewriting of journal entries unless they are to be used for some other purpose where corrections do need to be made. If journals are being read and responded to regularly by teachers, they can remain as originally written. Further rewriting would be pointless.

D. Diagnostic Teaching and the Relationship Between Journals and the Writing Curriculum

In this project, the journal writing itself and the other activities associated with the journals took approximately one-third of the time allotted to the language arts. From accounts given by the teachers, the remaining class time was spent primarily on grammar from the language arts text books. In effect, two programs were in operation. Journal writing was one. Grammatical concepts and skills was the other. Throughout the year, the project staff and the teachers had ample opportunity to think about the relationship between journals and the total language arts curriculum. Is it possible to offer a unified, integrated program? Or, should journals and the other aspects of the language arts operate independently of each other?

Though it did not happen here to any great extent, we believe that a unified program is possible and preferable. Journal writing cannot be the only writing activity of the curriculum. However journal writing can become the seed-bed of a number of writing experiences. In both homerooms and separate language arts sections, we encourage journal writing every day, early in the day, for the first ten to twenty minutes of the period and occasionally longer, even a whole period. This establishes a routine when writing is valued and is continuous. The students are always responsible for having something to write about and the effect is cumulative. Thought it was sometimes difficult to establish this routine in the first few weeks, once established, the continuous and cumulative nature of the journals acquired strong motivational properties for many students, though not all of them. Many students took pride in the steadily accumulating record of work and many reported thinking about topics for their journals quite consciously and deliberately at various times throughout the day.

Journal writing becomes a daily writing workshop, a time for first-drafts on many suitable topics. Much of what is written will remain exactly as it is, but some will be selected for further development. The teacher reads everything and systematically makes notes of individual and group needs. This careful, knowledgeable, daily observation of students' work is diagnostic in nature and provides the raw material from which the teacher establishes instructional priorities. The remaining time is then spent on developing needed skills and concepts. In this way a very close relationship is developed between skills selected for practice, grammatical concepts to be learned, and the application of those skills and concepts in student written work. Traditional materials can be used in many cases for skills and concepts lessons.

In summary, students attempt a number of different writing activities during their journal time. Their efforts are observed by teachers, and help in the

form of skills and concepts lessons is systematically provided as often and as long as necessary.

We find this to be just as structured, just as systematic, and a more meaningful and more relevant approach than the use of an arbitrary, pre-planned, pre-determined sequence of separate skills and concepts lessons. We are not aware of a single topic in the conventional written language curriculum that cannot be included in this totally integrated and orderly approach.

Summary and Conclusions

Twelve of fourteen language arts sections in grades 5 through 8 of a public elementary school participated in an extensive journal writing project throughout the 1982-83 school year. In-service presentations guided the project at regular intervals. Participation was voluntary and teachers were free to implement as many or as few project activities as they chose.

In most sections, students spent from ten to twenty minutes daily or almost daily on journal writing throughout the year. Three seventh and eighth grade sections wrote journals through the first semester only and scheduled the second semester class writing time for work on research papers. Teachers' written responses to journals was regular in all cases but one, but varied in frequency and amount. Teachers reported gaining diagnostic information from the journals but only occasionally used that information for lesson planning. Most of the remaining time in language arts periods followed the sequence of topics in the language arts text books with a heavy emphasis on traditional grammar.

All sections made good gains on standardized measures of spelling achievement and language usage. On holistic measures of general writing ability, the group as a whole, and six sections for whom data are available, showed improvement over the year. The sections of lowest ability made the greatest gains.

Each term most students fastened their journals into decorated folders or cardboard covers. At the end of the year they had an impressive amount of work, of good appearance, bound in three or four volumes, and legibly written on a variety of topics giving them an interesting, personal record of events and thoughts. Paragraph construction, sentence construction, mechanics of capitalization and punctuation, matters of usage, and spelling were generally good. A careful examination of a number of journals showed needs to be individualized rather than generalized across sections. Some students illustrated their journals with colored crayons or cartoon-style line drawings in ink.

Four issues were identified.

1. Who is the most appropriate audience for journals?
2. To what extent should teachers help students improve the content of their journals?
3. Is editing, proofreading, and rewriting a part of journal writing?
4. What is the relationship between journals and the total language arts curriculum?

Taking into account all of the experiences, including all of the interviews, the discussions with teachers, and the measurements gathered across the entire project, the position of the project staff is that:

1. The teacher is the most appropriate audience. Dialogue between student and teacher provides the most authentic and consistent motivation for journal writing.
2. Through individual and group lessons, teachers should help students develop their powers of observation and imagination and in so doing help them to make conscious improvements of the content of their journals.
3. Other parts of the writing curriculum should give students plenty of opportunities to edit, proofread, and revise their work. If

this is happening and journals are being read and responded to regularly, there should be no need for anything more than an occasional revision.

4. Journal writing is only one of many activities in the school writing curriculum. It is a sustained, cumulative, purposeful activity, which gives students daily opportunities to gain control of many features of written language. Journals are versatile. They may be used by students as an experimental seed-bed for the first drafts of many forms of written expression. Journals are a valuable and immediate source of diagnostic information helping teachers to assess needs and establish instructional priorities throughout the year. They are a record of progress. They are one of a small number of activities which have the potential of providing an organizational framework for almost all of the written work of a total language arts curriculum.

Journal writing is a manageable, holistic activity of demonstrated worth which provides a most welcome alternative to today's skills dominated curriculum.

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